PASS CHRISTIAN, MS

Pass Christian Area
1699 1999
Colonization Tricentennial Committee

The Tricentennial

Volume 1, Issue 9 July 15, 1998

$10,000.00 DONATION

From David LaRosa

(The above photo is courtesy of Librarian Sally James as Dayton Robinson accepts the $10,000 check from Supervisor David LaRosa at the Pass Christian Anniversary Celebration in June. Centered between them is the bronze bust of d'Iberville which was donated by sculptor Michelle Smith of Pass Christian.)

The check was in-hand and is now in the Bank drawing interest as Supervisor David LaRosa kept his promise to donate $10,000. This was pledged at the Tricentennial "Kick-Off" Dinner this past April. It was just that simple, as School Superintendent Philip Terrell completed his appeal for funds, David LaRosa sent up a note to the front of the St. Paul auditorium to be read by master of ceremonies Mayor Billy McDonald. -- And, the note was just as simple -- I will award $10,000 to the Tricentennial Committee!

The Tricentennial Committee Officers, Executive Committee, and Board of Directors express warm and sincere gratitude to a most responsive public official. David LaRosa has given our Committee a great boost in meeting some of its committed goals.

(Continued on page 7)

Tricentennial News

A revised Budget was submitted by the Executive Committee and approved by the Board of Directors. It was determined that the total fund gathering for the scheduled events and projects would fall safely in the range of $40,000. The significant budgeted cost factors are: the Tricentennial Newsletter, the bronzing of the d'Iberville bust, a complete set of flags that have waved the soils of Pass Christian (which will definitely exceed the 8 Flags which have been presumed by many as the total count), four or five Historic Markers (replacement of three lost ones and adding two more), and the remaining costs are basic support costs such as postage, etc.

If everyone receiving a Tricentennial Newsletter participates as a paying member at $15 or more, the two-year projected cost will be covered. Donations received from organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals are expected to cover the balance. To this end, our gratitude extends to those who made some of the larger contributions a reality, such as: Supervisor David LaRosa' $10,000, the City of Pass Christian's $500, and the first contribution of $500 was offered the *Friends of the Library*. There have also been a few wonderfully nice *"Sweethearts"*, who as anonymous individuals have been most gracious in their recognizing the need for funds to meet projected expenses.

PORTALS TO THE PASS

The *"Town Library"* was the first established library along the Coast between Mobile and New Orleans. This past February 21, the Library would have celebrated 105 years of continued existence since its reported inception in 1893 when it was first opened by the "Ladies' of the Town Library Association". The first president of the Association, Miss Isabel Bowman Finley, conducted the original operations, first in her home and later in one of the downtown stores. Eventually, the quaint cottage, located at 221 East Scenic Drive, was purchased in 1908 and was later moved back approximately 30 feet.

Today, many folks pass by not even knowing what's inside. A neat wooden sign once hung like a shingle beckoning the interest of so many local townsfolk and visitors. Now, the sign, in disrepair, has fallen.

Its last dedicated Librarian, Miss Catherine James, religiously kept the doors open and provided reading literature to citizens in "The Pass" as well as many tourists and locals from other parts of the Coast. In maintaining her hours, Miss James stated, "We are open in the mornings between the hours of Ten a.m. and Noon and we continue to have our doors open from Monday through Saturday. The Town Library preserved an atmosphere of hospitality famous to Mississippi, which was appreciated by visitors and new-comers who went there. Since the illness and demise of Miss James, the *Town Library's* doors have remained closed.

Most of the books on the shelves of the ***Town Library*** were donated throughout the past century by local citizenry and authors of historic books. A treasure chest of hidden knowledge lies there languishing in now unventilated, and locked away in an unsecured environment with only an old-time skeleton-key lock-and-latch to bind it.

Many original publications and signatures of past citizens including original publications such as the *Writings of George Washington* and the *Writings of Thomas Jefferson* are unavailable to the general public for whom the literary treasury was first ordained by the ***Library Association of Pass Christian.***

The Mississippi Gulf Coast, and Pass Christian in particular, has had many authors live in resident who have penned many books over the centuries. All of these authors regularly deposited copies of autographed samples of their works as a contribution to the success of the Library.

In addition, one of the original stated purposes of the Town Library was to foster education. During the early 1900s, the west side of the building housed books while the east side was used as an elementary school where classes were taught by Miss Nannie Sutter. Over the years it became known as Sutter's School.

With the increased interest of citizens in the upcoming Tricentennial, there has been an increased desire on the part of a number of Pass Christianians to seek salvage of the historic values which are stored inside the closed doors. Virgil Harris, Chairman of the Heritage Committee for the Tricentennial gained encouragement from the *Friends of the Library* and other organization members to forward the necessary nomination forms to Jackson, MS in compliance for nominees to Endangered Historic Places and the Committee is considering an Historic Marker placement at the site of the "Portals to the Pass."

Early Stories on Origins of DeLisle

During their initial venture along the Coast, the French discovered a small tribe of Choctaws living around the Bay of St. Louis area. Their village was called *Achicapoulas* meaning bad grass. As one of the ship's historians wrote: "in 1699, d'Iberville set out to visit a bay about nine leagues from Ship Island, to which he gave the name of [those waters] St. Louis. But finding the water very shallow there, he concluded to fix his settlement at Biloxi." Thus it was that the shallow waters of the Bay of St. Louis kept it from becoming the first French capital of the Mississippi Valley.

Bienville returned to the bay aboard the *Le Marin*, upon which the young carpenter and journalist Andre Joseph Penicaut wrote, "We shortly afterwards found a beautiful bay, about one league in width by four in circumference, which was named the Bay of St. Louis . . . We hunted there three days and killed fifty deer."

Apparently, Bienville and his brother felt the Indians at the Bay were friendly, because they made many hunting trips there. One of Bienville's entourage, Jean Baptiste Saucier, explored around the eastern coastline of the Bay of St. Louis and penetrated several inlets which he encountered, such as the DeLisle Bayou and the *Riviere des Loups*, which is now called Wolf River.

During ensuing years settlements were established at Wolf River and Bayou DeLisle.

A descendant of Jean Baptiste Saucier, Philip Saucier, received a Spanish land grant on July 6, 1794, the vacant land was situated at the Bay St. Louis along Bayou DeLisle, having a front of 20 arpents on said Bayou, bounded on the southwest by land belonging to his brother-in-law, Bartholomew Grelot, and on the northeast by vacant land.

During the early 1700s, the French spread out along the Coast and invaded the Bayous and Rivers of the Bay of St. Louis. Following the Treaty of Paris of 1763, the English transported many French Canadians to the Gulf Coast. From the first days of re-settlement, the single men took the comely Choctaw women as concubines. They insisted that they had to have women to do their washing and cooking, and to maintain their cabins. As time passed, small dusky half-breed children were found playing about their cabins. However, they grew up to be approved by the blood-tolerant Canadians.

The first coinage was introduced to the Coast in the form of copper coins dated 1721. Specimens have been found in the vicinity of the Bay. A story goes that one of Jean Lafitte's pirates slipped away from the moorings at one of the Coast inlets and took off with some of the booty in order to bury the cache at DeLisle. In carrying the hefty chest, he also took along his huge vicious dog which was left at the treasure site to perform guard duty. The buccaneer, however, was killed while plundering for more treasures. The dog continued his vigilance until dying of old age. It has been reported by some folks at DeLisle that the ghost of the dog lives on and has been seen beneath an old Oak tree on dark nights as it prowls and growls all night long along the banks of the Wolf river.

Wolf Town had its name changed to DeLisle in 1884.

Past of the Pass

In October 1978, the canopy covering the main entrance to the VFW Bar suddenly fell, creating a loud disturbance to the inside patrons, but only Tim Leary and Nip Necaise were said to be curious.

The Simpsons

by Chipper McDermott

William G. "Bill" Simpson, Sr. was born August 17, 1893 to a well known Pass Family. He was the grandson of Mrs Jane Murphy Manders, the lady credited with saving Pass Christian from the Union forces on April 4, 1862, which became known as the *Bed Sheet Surrender.*

Willie, as he was known to his closest friends, graduated in 1911, from Holy Cross High School at New Orleans, where he attended on a baseball scholarship. He entered the U.S. Army in World War I, serving with the Allied Forces in France, along with fellow Pass Christianians, Bidwell Adam, Bernie French, and George Smith.

Following the war, Willie married Irma Lahey, also of Pass Christian. They had three children, Bill Jr., born in 1923; Betty, born in 1925; and Jim, born in 1930.

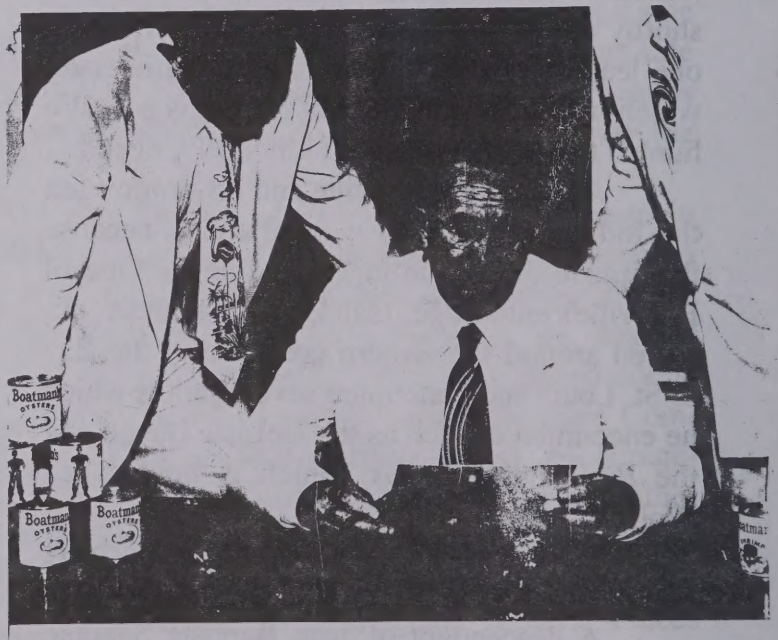
Mr. Simpson's first business venture brought him together with his old friend, Bennie French, as they began an import business from Havana, Cuba to Henderson Point during the Prohibition era. After Prohibition, Willie entered full time into government services, having served as chief deputy of the Harrison County Sheriff's Department before becoming Mayor of Pass Christian from 1943-1947.

Following his term as Mayor, Mr. Simpson went into the seafood business in both Pass Christian and Gulfport as owner of a seafood factory. Mr. Simpson died October 7, 1953 and his seafood factory remained open until Hurricane Betsy in 1965.

Willie Simpson was credited with many civic and charity organizations, one of which was the promotion of $1,000,000 in war bond sales during World War II.

His son, Bill Jr., went into politics and was a speechwriter for both Senator Jim Eastland and President Jimmy Carter.

Son Jim served as a state representative for Mississippi for 28 years, and daughter, Betty became a teacher and mother while married to Ken Tarzetti, football coach at Jesuit High School in New Orleans.



The Simpson family is still prominent on the Coast, with grandsons, Jim, Jr. now serving in the State Legislature and Stephen serving as Assistant District Attorney for Harrison, Hancock, and Stone counties.

USM to facilitate

Center for Study of the Gulf South

by James "Pat" Smith, Ph.D.

The following announcement by Dr. Pat Smith, is a report on preliminary plans for the *Center for the Study of the Gulf South* and the establishment of a Gulf South History Collection in the anticipated $Six million USM Gulf Coast Library Complex. Dr. Smith has agreed to keep us informed of progress and further gifts to the Library Complex. His report follows:

"Through the generosity of James Baird, the History Department at the University of Southern Mississippi will be creating a new *Center for the Study of the Gulf South.* According to the department's proposal, the Center for the Study of the Gulf South will aim to dramatically enhance USM's ability to produce, research, and present educational and public programming on southern history in general and the history of the broader Gulf region in particular from the earliest French, British and Spanish colonial settlements to the present day."

"At the same time, the Cox Library at USM Gulf Coast, in anticipation of construction of a new $6 million complex on the Gulf Park Campus, has proposed the creation of special *Gulf South Collection* in its new facility which would compliment the new history department center. The Gulf South Collection at Long Beach would focus on Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama history and genealogy and would become an official government records repository for all federal publications related to the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf South Collection will seek donations of books, journals, and cash to be used to build this collection as construction and completion of the new Cox Library draws near over the next 24 to 36 months."

"As part of plans for the center, the USM history department has committed to hiring a new professor who is a specialist in French Louisiana who will be active in presenting public programs on the Coast and throughout the Gulf South region. Through the *Center for the Gulf South,* USM will undertake regular symposiums on the fast-growing Gulf South region whose complex cultural and historical traditions are not yet fully understood."

"Local historian, Mrs. Gloria Moran has made the first donation to the Gulf South Collection at Gulf Park. Mrs. Moran's initial gift consists of her personal collection of several years issue of two journals of interest to the Gulf South collection at Gulf Park. Persons wishing to donate books, materials, or money for the development of Cox Library's planned Gulf South Collection or any other USM Gulf Coast collection should contact Mr. Edward McCormack, Director of Cox Library on the USM Gulf Park Campus in Long Beach. Telephone 865-4500."

The author of the report, Dr. Pat Smith, is History Coordinator at USM Gulf Park Campus. He may be contacted at 865-4511.

Getting Lost!

by Dan Ellis

One of the wonderful experiences of living on the Gulf Coast is the natural beauty of the waters of the Mississippi Sound. Helen Caire was enchanted by its beauty as she struck her line verses about *Emerald Town*. In addition to the beauty of the Sound, the beaches, and the tints in the sky, I am also entranced by the majesty of the hilly terrain and the creeks off from the Coast. A beautiful drive is along Red Creek Road which is probably the oldest roadway in the Pass Christian area which was first blazed by the Choctaw Indians who occupied the whole area.

On the way to check out Wolf River Canoe & Kayak Rentals I passed a sign that said *"Red Beans & Rice"*. I had no idea of stopping, but by afterthought, I did a quick U-Turn and pulled into the shaded area of what appeared to be a private residence flying a *Welcome Flag*. Escaping my car, I passed a caged cock-a-tiel that amazingly announced, "I'm Peaches!"

Dumbfounded, I went into the wrong door which was a Ladies Hair Studio. I asked for the "rice and beans place" and the young lady attentively smiled and stated, "At the front door." Upon entering by way of another door I thought I was still in the Beauty Salon because I was confronted by a cosmetic display case and the same young lady. This time she bid me to enter. I did, and I spied in the adjoining room several neat tables and chairs which were painted with resplendent magnolias. (I found out later that the floral designs were rendered by Betsy Burgess, owner of the Botanica Gardens on Scenic Drive.)

It wasn't lunch time, so I introduced myself to JoAn Niceley, owner, who offered me a cup of coffee and a tour of her home in which

she operated her Hair Studio for the past four years and informed me that she had just opened ***Tea Cupps***, *Café & Gift Shoppe*, within a few weeks past. She explained that the original name was *The Tea Room*, but changed it to make men more comfortable to the environment. JoAn furher explained that her German ancestry had induced her to make many trips to Germany where she fell in love with the handmade lace doilies, napkins, and embroidered paraphernalia. I punned that she could have offered me "laced" coffee with the profusion of lace items which adorned her gift shop.

Besides rice and beans, desserts, and gumbo, in a separate section, Darla Kinsey proffered a collection of skin care and cosmetic lotions and offers her own complete menu of scented articles and Christian gifts.

All of the bedrooms have been converted to handicrafts and art works. One of the rooms is dedicated only to local coast artists.

It's great to find oneself while in the process of getting lost! But, ***Tea Cupps*** is easy to locate by way of DeLisle, Menge or Espy to Red Creek Road. If you get lost, just call 452-0001 and ask for JoAn Cupp Niceley and meet the official greeter -- *"Peaches."*

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HENDERSON'S POINT

In 1903, Leland J. Henderson, Secretary of the Mexican Gulf Land Co. advertised the assets of purchasing land in what was the vastly unsettled Henderson's Point. Lee lived in Bay St. Louis while his brother, Elliot Henderson, lived in Pass Christian and served as the company's president.

They promoted the area as "the only remaining undeveloped tract of land between New Orleans and Mobile with immediate access to rail transportation." The beach frontage of the Point is 15,000 feet on the Bay of St. Louis and "new wide streets would be laid out with plenty of parks and regular blocks composed of large lots. An anchorage basin would be dredged for boat harborage with a nearby club house with a street car line extending to Pass Christian providing transportation to Gulfport and Biloxi."

Their grandfather, John Henderson was one of the original large land holders of much of the Pass Christian peninsula extending from the Bay eastward to Donlin Avenue. (See the map of 1858 depicting the division of Henderson's estate in Map Set III, available at City Hall and Valentino's for a $10 donation.)

Pass-Cuisine

Young Erin Thead, 14, of Collinsville, Mississippi placed in the competitions of the National Spelling Bee, but stumbled on spelling "delitescent", if it was pronounced as delite-scent, most of us would have gone awry, but pronounced deli-tescent, we can excuse the young lady. But of interest is the word's meaning: *something lying hidden.* And what lies hidden are the "deli-sensuous" recipes that we are waiting for you to reveal and send forward to our POB 354. Retrieve your delitescent pencils and use your delitescent memories to make our delitescent CookBook a success! Join the Fun! Meet the folks who are sending in their special succulent savoring secrets.

$10,000.00 DONATION

(Continued from page 1)

With a number of projects underway for the remainder of the year and the whole year of 1999, fund raising ideas have been jelling in the minds of the Fund Raising Committee headed by Bob Fairbank. Contributions have been sent in periodically and we thank all contributors. We also extend our warm gratitude to all of the members who have sent in a minimum of $15.

A Growing Roster

Keeping Dayton Robinson busy has made him quite happy because as Treasurer for the Tricentennial Committee, he has been able to make a cheerful financial reporting. If membership dues can pay for the cost of the Tricentennial Newsletter, then the other donations and contributions can be used for other projects which are budgeted. We wish to thank the many individuals, businesses, and organizations for their responsive support of the Tricentennial plans. Won't you please help?

YES! Sign me up!
I want to keep Dayton busy, enclosed is $15 or more for the two-year subscription and dues.
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